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Cover: A find fit for a king. An adult male timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*) encountered in Jackson County, Illinois. See pp. 204–215 for details. Photograph by Dr. Stephen L. Barten.

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Another Observation of a Three-toed Box Turtle from the Western Border of Southern Illinois

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Abstract

Three-toed box turtles (*Terrapene carolina triunguis*) range across much of Missouri and specimens have been reported from Mississippi River border counties of Illinois sporadically since 1893. Here, we report an additional sighting of a three-toed box turtle from the western border of southern Illinois.

Introduction

Three-toed box turtles (*Terrapene carolina triunguis*) are distributed over much of Missouri (Johnson, 1987) and the Mississippi River is often used to map the eastern range boundary of three-toed box turtles from the southwestern corner of Tennessee northward (Powell et al., 2016). It is well established that eastern box turtles (*Terrapene carolina carolina*) are part of the native Illinois herpetofauna (Garman 1892; Cahn, 1937; Smith, 1961; Phillips et al., 1999), but the occurrence of an established, native population of three-toed box turtles in Illinois is far less certain.

Garman (1892) suggested both subspecies of *Terrapene carolina* occur in Illinois, but provided no supporting evidence for the occurrence of three-toed box turtles in the state. Hurter (1893) reported the discovery of a three-toed box turtle in the American Bottoms region of Madison County, Illinois. In his treatise of Illinois turtles, Cahn (1937) did not mention three-toed box turtles. Smith (1961) provided relatively detailed information regarding the observation of a single three-toed box turtle in Illinois. He considered the animal, found near the Mississippi River at Golden Eagle (Calhoun County) in April 1954, to be a waif from Missouri or possibly an intergrade exhibiting morphological features more characteristic of three-toed box turtles. He excluded three-toed box turtles from his list of native Illinois herpetofauna.

Additional observations of three-toed box turtles in Mississippi River border counties of Illinois have subsequently surfaced

in the literature. The first report was by Paukstis and Janzen (1988) who found one specimen in Alexander County near the community of Olive Branch. Gilbert and Gilbert (1992) found a single individual near Valmeyer, Monroe County. Paukstis and Janzen (1993) reported another three-toed box turtle, this time from rural Jackson County. Finally, Tucker and Hatcher (1994) reported one specimen each from rural areas of Madison County and Union County. The proximity of these turtles to Missouri suggests the possibility that the animals observed in Illinois may have naturally dispersed across the Mississippi River during floods or by swimming (Latham, 1916; Tyler 1979). In addition to these published reports, other observations of three-toed box turtles in Illinois have gone unreported (Paukstis and Janzen, 1988) or—because of their location in the state (Cook, DuPage and Lake counties)—have been discounted as released animals (Dancik, 1974; Bushey, 1978; Ludwig et al., 1992).

Description

At approximately 1235 hr, 10 October 2016, we encountered an adult three-toed box turtle atop Fountain Bluff, Jackson



Figure 1.



Figure 2.

County, Illinois (37°40'59.5"N, 89°30'22.5"W; approximated using Google Earth). The turtle was approximately 80 meters upslope from the east bank of the Mississippi River in deciduous forest. We examined and photographed the turtle (Figures 1 and 2), and released it within minutes of discovery.

The turtle's carapace is brownish and patterned with pale yellowish dashes and lines radiating outward from the center of each vertebral and pleural scute; the scute seams of the yellowish plastron are outlined with dark pigment. Red-orange pigment occurs laterally and ventrally on the head and neck, the jaws are orange, and yellow pigment occurs on scales on the front of each forelimb. Each hind foot has three toes. Although the flat plastron suggests the turtle is female; red eyes, considerable red-orange pigment on the head and neck, a relatively long tail, and curved claws on the hind feet suggest that the turtle is male (Johnson, 1987; Ernst and Lovich 2009). Although the pattern of eastern box turtles is extremely variable (Cahn, 1937; Smith, 1961), the color pattern of this individual, in combination with three toes on the hind feet, indicates that it is a three-toed box turtle. Jeff Briggler (Missouri Department of Conservation, personal communication 2016) confirmed our identification of this turtle as a three-toed box turtle.

Discussion

Insofar as we are aware, ours is the seventh published report of a three-toed box turtle from the western border of Illinois and the second for Fountain Bluff. A number of explanations have been put forth for the occurrence of three-toed box turtles in Illinois, including human transport and natural dispersal across the Mississippi River (Paukstis and Janzen, 1988; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1992; Paukstis and Janzen, 1993; Tucker and Hatcher, 1994). Tucker and Hatcher (1994) argued for the inclusion of

three-toed box turtles on the list of Illinois herpetofauna. Apparently following this recommendation, Ernst and Lovich (2009:410) described the northern range of three-toed box turtles as "southern Illinois and Missouri." The most recent Peterson Field Guide (Powell et al., 2016), however, displays the Mississippi River as a natural barrier separating eastern box turtles from three-toed box turtles. Further, in the most recent guide to the Illinois herpetofauna, Phillips et al. (1999) question the occurrence of three-toed box turtles in Illinois and classify the species as non-native to the state.

We refrain from suggesting whether or not three-toed box turtles should be included as a member of the Illinois herpetofauna, particularly because humans frequently release box turtles outside their natural range (Dodd, 2001). However, we do not believe that the Mississippi River is a complete barrier to movement of box turtles. The occasional discovery of three-toed box turtles in rural areas of Mississippi River border counties in Illinois since 1893 and the observation of eastern box turtles in rural areas of Mississippi River border counties in Missouri (Jeff Briggler, Missouri Department of Conservation, personal communication 2016), suggests the possibility of natural movement by both subspecies of box turtles across the Mississippi River. We encourage biologists to report observations of three-toed box turtles in Illinois. This is especially important given a recent recommendation to split three-toed box turtles and eastern box turtles into separate species (Martin et al., 2013; but see rebuttal by Fritz and Havaš, 2014).

Acknowledgment

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***Horridus* the Hard Way, or, My Friends Are Trying to Kill me (Part 2 of 2)**

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Prelude to part 2 of this narrative: Any references to the herpetofauna encountered in this article are true and accurate to the best of the author's ability. The names of the people have been changed to protect the guilty. In order to keep this article light-hearted and entertaining, some liberties were taken throughout with the interactions of the herpers among themselves, and toward the herps that they encountered.

Getting back to where we were—where were we? The King knows! If the reader wants to also know, he or she will have to read part 1 of this article. Go ahead—make your day!

One thing not included in part 1 was a conversation that occurred between the King and our good friend who could not join us for the adventure that followed. The Scoutmaster has a downright uncanny way of asking good questions at the right time. He addressed the King thusly: “What is the one thing that you hope to see on this trip?” Without hesitation, he received his answer. “The only thing I want is to personally find a Timber Rattlesnake. Anything else will be bonus.”

Later that same day, the Stalwart issued the following stern warning to the King: “Whatever you do, don’t let them take you to Booger Hollow. That chute is murderous. It’s a grueling death march. You’ll never make it back out.”

3 October 2016—Booger Hollow and the Grotto

As the four of us gathered around the breakfast table, the main topic of discussion was where we were going this day. Tarzan laid out three options, the pros and cons of each were beaten to death. The King finally asked the almighty question that was burned in his brain. “Which one of these places has the best chance of *horridus*?” Without hesitation, Tarzan replied “Booger Hollow.” Paparazzi gave a grim nod of acknowledgment. With the Stalwart’s warning still ringing in his perennially ringing ears, the King stayed quiet, completely missing an opportunity to throw a wuss on that notion. All at the table mistook the King’s silence as a quiet vote of approval. Tarzan made the decision for us. Booger Hollow it would be. Any further remonstrations would be fruitless, as on this trip, it would always be three against one. The King had unwittingly roped himself to three herptomaniacs.

But there was the other side of that coin. *What if, against all odds, the King got his horridus down in Booger Hollow on this fateful day?* Why, that would be another matter, of course. Then the King would no longer care if he got out of it alive. It was a *beautiful* thought, a righteous thought, and it was this hope that led the King to embrace whatever was to come next. The plan was set, and the plan was on. Go find that *horridus*—like a man! With that thought burned in his brain, there was little else to do but rise from the table, head for the bathroom, and fearfully puke his guts out. Yeah, he was going to knock ‘em dead today for sure!

Phase one of the plan was to pick up the Guide at his house. This was done so that we could all squeeze into Tarzan’s vehicle, save five bucks in gas, and experience the camaraderie of the ride out as a tightly-knit group. Fortunately, the Guide is not

a large man, and we were able to shoehorn him into the back seat between the Hobbit and the King. It is well that the Flash lived in the opposite direction that we were going, or we would have no doubt picked him up as well. There might have been enough room to lay him across the laps of the people up front—if he scrunched up a bit. Luckily, the arrangement was that we were to meet the Flash at the famed Booger Hollow parking lot. A slight mishap occurred en route to the death march that was about to ensue. The King suddenly felt a searing pain shoot up his left calf—a cramp! Perfect! Tarzan pulled his chariot over to allow the King to work that out. The Guide sagely forecast: “That’s not a good start.” Neither was all the puking, but nobody knew about that. It wouldn’t have mattered, for his friends were trying to kill him anyhow. Any extra suffering inflicted during the process would be construed as a bonus.

We arrived at our destination at 0930. According to the King’s trusty Kestrel pocket weather station, the air temperature at that time was 21 °C, with 20% clouds overhead, 78% humidity, and negligible wind speed. It was about as nice a day as ever can be expected in Illinois. The King noticed that he was not the only one documenting the events of the day. The Guide was spot on with his notebook as well. The Flash came roaring in with the style that is his trademark, and soon we were ready to rock.

The fine folk in southern Illinois who create their hiking trails seem to be unaware of one fundamental rule. The ideal hiking trail starts low and goes high. Starting out going downhill seems fine and dandy to any witless hiker, who might be just full of piss and vinegar at the start of the hike. It is then a simple matter for said hiker to use up all their stores of energy and water before heading back. Then, they are screwed by the reverse of Newton’s theory: What goes down must come back up.

The trail leading to the depths of Booger Hollow started out deceptively easy. Two of us could walk abreast on the gently sloping dirt trail. This was a cake walk—nothin’ to it! And then we hit “the chute.” For those unfamiliar with the chute, visualize a gigantic human nostril, roughly 100 meters long. Cut that nostril in half lengthwise, and place half of it, hollow side up, on a hillside at about a 45-degree incline. While in the process of doing this, take pains to leave a thin residue of snot, mucous membranes, and slick nasal hairs in place. That’s the ticket! Only instead of the soft, organic tissue that comes as an accessory to the human nostril, the chute consists of a long of stretch bone-breaking bedrock. A slick little stream of water trickles down the center, and moss and ferns cling to either side. The only thing missing is a giant catcher’s mitt at the bottom, which would be a most efficacious method of collecting the bodies at the end of each day. The Guide, who had not yet learned of the

murder conspiracy part of the trip, was kind enough to show the King some handholds carved into the slick bedrock. The King's knees were now so shot that he had to employ a stiff, toy soldier walk through it all. When at the midway point, a glance backward revealed that Paparazzi was still standing at the top, his camera pointing at ready in order to photo document any tumble the King may make. But ha! The King made it down unscathed, as did everybody else.

As soon as the King broke free of the chute, he suddenly became aware of the cathedral-like conditions that surrounded him. Massive, chalk-colored limestone bluffs towered to either side of him, separated by a wide swath of undulating forest bottomland. The ground was covered with leaf litter and rather open, with the occasional downed chunks of branches and trunks scattered about. A clear stream trickled along the base of a series of bluffs to his left, and glances upward revealed a riotous barrage of multi-colored tree canopy. Dense foliage dangled from the tops of the bluffs, and in places, small rivulets of water tinkled down them to join the stream. It was a silent land of sun and ever-changing shade patterns, the hues and colors seemed to change and dance before the eyes of the on-looker. It was a magnificent place to behold, as packed with beauty and wonder as any place the King had ever been. Why had the King *not* ever been brought here before?

While the King was gawking at his surroundings, his five companions immediately began scouring the cliff base to his left. In no time flat, he found himself to be the tail-gunner. A good tail-gunner does not follow in the footsteps of those leading, but rather, watches where they are looking, and seeks other ground to check out. This left him in the flats, circling the stumps and downed logs, well away from the rock structures that the others were favoring. In no time flat, the people exploring the cliff bottoms began to score, leaving little else for the King to do but be the last to check out and photograph each find. It was clear that the bluffs were the place to herp, but with five others already overcrowding the area, that option seemed hopeless. He began to wish that he was alone down here, so that he could have it all to himself. But wish in one hand, defecate in the other, and see what you are left with.

The first find was an Eastern Box Turtle that was ~2 m deep in a muddy-bottomed mini-cave. The King had lagged so far off course that by the time he got there, the only one left to admire the find with him was Papparazzi. To be sure, there are box turtles in Arizona, but they are a rather dingy and drab lot. This one was a screamer! He was a large adult—a prime of life animal, with a mean carapace length (MCL) of roughly 125 mm. His carapace was nearly black in base coloration, with gaudy splashes of yellow stripes and flecks gaily bedazzling the top and sides. His forelegs were a bright yellow, and his head was a blazing montage of orange blotches that encircled his burning red rimmed eyeballs. The pupil in the center of each blazing iris accentuated the red, looking not unlike the center of a crimson daisy. The beauty of his head surpassed the head markings of any Gila Monster that the King has ever seen, and that is saying a lot. The King has seen his share of box turtles in his lifetime, but this one was the capper! Many photos ensued (Figure 1).

At the point that the box turtle was found, the bluff as well as



Figure 1. The first find in Booger Hollow was this handsome Eastern Box Turtle (*Terrapene carolina*). “The beauty of his head surpassed the head markings of any Gila Monster that the King has ever seen, and that is saying a lot.” Image by the King.

the stream bed hooked a sharp bend to the north. The trace of those ahead of us revealed they were going along and slightly up the bluff. Once again, the King drifted off to the flats, until such time as the rest of the group could be viewed again. They scored the first snake of the day, which was a young Cottonmouth sprawled out in the leaf litter of the forest floor. Following that, there was a brief period of time where all guns fell silent. The King couldn't help but notice how hard these guys were pretending to be in good physical shape. Tarzan was everywhere, one moment 100 meters this way, the next, 100 meters in the opposite direction. The Flash was moving so quickly that his slender frame was whistling through the total lack of breeze. Paparazzi kept pace despite lugging his hefty field howitzer on his back, the Hobbit was a complete animal, bull rushing his way from place to place. The Guide kept plugging along, notebook in hand, the dutiful scribe who was noting everything on the spot. And the King blundered stiffly along behind.

When we reached the place where the bluffs to either side of the canyon narrowed, and then spread apart again, all herpetological hell broke loose. Just before everybody forked off, the King scored a dandy of a juvenile Cottonmouth spread lengthwise under an overhang. The Flash and the Guide drifted over to the new set of bluffs to our right, while Tarzan, Paparazzi and the Hobbit bore left along the bluffs that were now rumbling the opposite direction. And then, both parties began to score. Tarzan found another Cottonmouth, which was an adult with handsome banding of black, brown and tan. It was stuffed into the tight opening of what at first appeared to be a shallow cleft. The Hobbit snapped off a quick image of this, with Paparazzi next in line. The Cottonmouth backed off some between photographers, revealing another Cottonmouth tucked along side of it. Meanwhile, the Flash and the Guide also began to score on the new cliff line that they were following. Tarzan must have grabbed hold of some vines and swung over, for his path intercepted that of the King—who was hobbling painfully toward the Flash and the Guide. We were about 50 meters away from joining them, and then Tarzan found another Eastern Box Turtle foraging amongst the leaves on the forest floor. This one was a female, with a MCL of roughly 100 mm. While much drabber than her male counterpart, she was still a thing of beauty. About the time

that Tarzan and the King arrived to view the Cottonmouth found by the Guide and Flash, so did the remaining members of the party.

What followed next was an absolute herpetological candy store. At first, everybody was staring at a large adult (~90 cm TL) Cottonmouth that was sprawled in a hollow bowl-like cleft in the cliff base. This one remained motionless, but did indicate that it was aware of our presence by gaping in classic Cottonmouth fashion. The inner working of its snappers were lined with sharp, spike-like teeth. Even without taking the venomous fangs into consideration, a bite from this one would be nasty! As the King was photographing this snake, one member of the party backtracked along the cliff base, and encountered the first major snake find of the day. A Copperhead was postured with its head and neck held in an S-shape, the S was completely out of a crevice in the limestone. It was poised roughly chest high in the crevice, the S actually being outside of the same, resting on nothing but air. Directly below the head, a wide spider web was slung like a hammock. Above the snake, the limestone was stained a lime-green coloration, (perhaps the result of being slimed by algae over the eons), while below, the chalky brownish white hues more characteristic of the predominant color of the limestone around us were apparent. Add to that situation a copper colored head with orange eyes blazing outward at us, with the light orange and tan-to-beige bands on the head and neck, all dangling over top of a shimmering silver swath of spider silk. It would be impossible to set up a better photo opportunity, and the most amazing aspect of it all was that the snake held its posture for the duration of the photography that followed. It was the King's first ever Illinois Copperhead, and it made a smashing first impression (Figure 2). Hoping to score a cheap Copperhead, the King used his trusty pocket mirror to shine above and behind the snake in view. There was nothing but the breath-taking orange and beige flanks of the snake under observation lying lengthwise in that crevice, but what a sight it was anyway! Meanwhile, juvenile Cottonmouths were being scored to both the left and the right of this magnificent find. The place was *infested* with them.

The gang continued deeper into the canyon along the edge of the southern formations. A small Rough Greensnake was encountered and photographed, as was a neonate Common Gartersnake. While everybody was photographing these, the



Figure 2. The first Copperhead (*Agkistrodon contortrix*) of the trip, photographed in situ. "It was the King's first ever Illinois Copperhead, and it made a smashing first impression." Image by Paparazzi.

King noted that he had the chance to move ahead, but passed on it, choosing instead to be the last to photograph the Greensnake. Tarzan was lending assistance to everybody as the best wrangler in the world, and he hung back with the King as well. By this point in time, he had swung all over the canyon anyhow, and knew where all the snakes were. Just after the King was finishing off photographing the Greensnake, the Flash found a very cooperative Copperhead sprawled out on some loose dirt under a cavernous overhang—right where the King would have found it if he had continued on instead of hanging back. Tarzan wandered over and gave the King nudge, and with a conspiratory whisper, informed him "I already found that one, but was saving it for you to find." The King grinned, while uttering "That was very kind of you, and I appreciate that. But *never* do that again—ok?" Tarzan grinned back, gave a nod, and was out of sight again. He *do* get around!

The Flash had taken the lead, and doubled back to inform us there was a Cottonmouth ahead, floating on the surface of the water. Whoa! A Cottonmouth in the water? What a concept! Everything we had seen thus far would indicate a terrestrial existence for them. We all gathered on top of a small rise along the stream bottom for a look, and sure enough, at roughly the center of a very clear and idyllic pool, a mid-sized Cottonmouth was basking on the surface of the water. Why it didn't spook and swim away is unknown. It seemed to be enjoying the luxurious buoyancy that its body provided. We tried a few photos, but we were poised in such fashion that the snake was between us and the sun. Our photos were getting washed out by reflected sunlight. We decided to circle around the pool, and get the sun at our backs. Fearful that we might scare the snake away in the process, we slipped well around the pool, using the surrounding vegetation and terrain as a shield. Our stealthy approach was all for naught. The last phase of encircling the snake involved going down a muddy stream bank, in full sight of the snake. One of our crew slipped, went down, and floundered about in the muck, creating a Hobbit-shaped mud angel in the process. This is always good for a couple of yucks. Amazingly, the snake stayed put throughout *that* flandickery, no doubt enjoying the spectacle.

The feeling was mutual. We also enjoyed the spectacle—of the snake. It kept its chunky, angular head cocked high, motionless, with its body trailing behind in an S shape. The sunlight that was now directly upon the gleaming snake highlighted what might otherwise be considered a drab brown base coloration, also accentuating the rust red saddles and delicate white threads of pin striping along the neck and head in sharp contrast. It floated on crystal clear water, its liquid shadow resting on the tawny bedding of the irregularly shaped flat cobblestones at the bottom of the shallow pool. Silvery minnows flashed underneath as they flitted gaily about their business, and a few hints of autumnal coloration were upon some of the drowned leaves that rested on the cobblestones. It was without a doubt the best photo opportunity of the trip thus far (Figure 3).

While some of us were photographing this snake, the Flash briskly scouted ahead. He returned with the joyous news that the mighty Snotlocker River, which flows through the center of Booger Hollow, had its nasal passages blocked. In other words, it was flooded. This was perhaps the result of all that rain men-



Figure 3. Cottonmouth (*Agkistrodon piscivorus*) photographed in situ. “It floated on crystal clear water, its liquid shadow resting on the tawny bedding of the irregularly shaped flat cobbles at the bottom of the shallow pool.” Image by Paparazzi.

tioned early in the narrative. Hence, we would have to wade through one of the backwater eddies in order to continue on.

We all finished up with the bathing, basking Cottonmouth, and gathered with the Flash to ascertain the situation. Sure enough, there was a stretch of water roughly 10 meters wide by 1 meter deep blocking our path. To attempt to get around it was not feasible, as it only got worse the farther downstream that we went. It was decided that a boot-removal operation would be prudent prior to crossing. What a pain in the ass a clogged Snotlocker can be! By this point in the hike, the King’s legs were so stiff that he was not sure he could even get his boots off, let alone back on. Much to the chagrin of the Flash, the King decided to just wallow on through it—boots and all. “But you’ll get your boots wet if you do that,” remonstrated the Flash. That thought had occurred to the King, who dismissed it as trivial. What he didn’t take into consideration was the extra ten pounds each that would be added to his already overstressed, bird-like legs for the remainder of this epic hike. Eventually, we started across. Cameras were held at ready, in the event that somebody took the plunge. There was no doubt that if somebody fell into the drink, it would be to the amusement of others. But these days, with all of the sensitive digital equipment we carry, a plunge into a stream can be a very expensive proposition—definitely *not* amusing in the least. But we all made it across without incident.

While the others were preoccupied with getting their socks and footgear back on their proper moorings, for the first time on the hike, the King took the lead. There was the base of a big, beautiful bluff to his right. Said bluff was in turn resplendently decorated with all the clefts, crevices, and crannies that the rest of the bluffs contained. There *had* to be a *horridus* around here somewhere! He moved slowly along, deep shining everything in his path. It would be embarrassing to miss something, and have someone else come along and find it. It stands to reason that the stretch of bluff that the King had to himself contained nothing. So slow was his progress that the others caught and passed him, and he was the tail-gunner once again. Cottonmouths became to make the scene in exorbitant numbers. When the trail led us along the edge of the Snotlocker, two adults were viewed swimming there. Five more were discovered just as the trail began to hook back away from the river. And through it all, the Guide

was steadily inscribing the details in his notebook. The man is an oak! The dataset that he has gathered through the years is staggering. An excellent example of how he uses this dataset can be found in his *Snakes of “Snake Road”* article that leads off the January 2016 *Bulletin of the Chicago Herpetological Society*. You will then begin to understand how diligent this guy is, and how important his life’s work of chronicling all that passes before his eyes has become.

Meanwhile, we were still smack dab in the middle of Cottonmouth central. If we would have scoured that spot another 15 minutes, we probably would have found at least 20 more. They were hanging in trees above us (Figure 4). They were moving away from the Mighty Snotlocker, coming right at us in the process. The ground around us was peppered with them. They were under tree branches, stumps, and on the move along the edges of the bluffs. It was an absolute cornucopia of Cottonmouths. While in the thick of this Cottonmouth turkey shoot, the granddaddy of them all was viewed. Why not? What we thought was a tire draped over the top of a log at the edge of the Snotlocker turned out to be a dandy of a 1.2-meter-long, fire-hose-thick behemoth of a Cottonmouth. It would be judged as huge anywhere, but in southern Illinois, where they are mostly dinky, this one was the champ. As Tarzan sagely put it “We are looking at a Cottonmouth that might be 30 years old!” (Figure 5).

While others were photographing this monster, the Flash headed the only possible direction to continue onward, (unless we wanted to swim). He started up a ten-meter-wide, rocky-rubble chute that was flanked by the continuous bluff we were following on one side, and a gargantuan barn-sized boulder on the other. The King was right behind him, and several others began trailing us. Just as the Flash crested the chute and began



Figure 4. “They were hanging in trees above us . . . It was an absolute cornucopia of Cottonmouths.” Image by Paparazzi.



Figure 5. “While in the thick of this Cottonmouth turkey shoot, the granddaddy of them all was viewed. Why not? What we thought was a tire draped over the top of a log at the edge of the Snotlocker turned out to be a dandy of a 1.2-meter-long, fire-hose-thick behemoth of a Cottonmouth.” Image by Paparazzi.

down the slope, he gazed left, and cried out “*Crotalus!*” (And at this point in writing this narrative, the King stopped to watch game seven of the 2016 MLB World Series. The Flash scores a *Crotalus*, and the Chicago Cubs are the world champs! They did not shine in sixty-nine, but were lean and mean in oh sixteen).

At the announcement of “*Crotalus*,” the King was confused. Nobody in Arizona has ever found a rattlesnake and called it a *Crotalus* when in earshot of him. *Crotalus* what? That is, what kind of *Crotalus* had he found? In Arizona, there can be as many as five species surrounding the herper. Hence, where the King calls home, if somebody finds a rattlesnake and wishes to announce it, the species name is utilized. It’s “*atrox*,” or “*cerberus*,” or “*molossus*” and so on. While the King’s brain fumbled with the definition of the hasty identification of the find, he suddenly had an epiphany. *There was only one species of Crotalus in these parts!* Hence, the Flash had been technically and regionally correct with his proclamation. This in turn would mean that he had just found a *horridus*. Holy smoke! Just when it couldn’t get any better—it did!

At the point of the discovery, the barn sized boulder was now behind us, and slightly to our left. The landscape at the base was a dry watershed, with stack upon stack of jumbled boulders, downed logs, tangles of vines and poison ivy. It was all capped by a thicket of sapling trees. The terrain was a riotous barrage of habitat, and only the best of eyes could have noticed that, coiled loosely in front of a downed log, and in direct sunlight, was a mid-sized Timber Rattlesnake. It was lying motionless, basking, when the Flash spotted it. Several phrases come to mind in describing what came next. “Like stink on a monkey” or “like a cheap suit” or “scum on a pond” would all work. As soon as the snake was spotted, the frenzied group surrounded it from all directions, like flies on feces. They set up their cameras around the cooperative snake in such fashion that there flat out wasn’t room for anything in that draw but that snake and the geeks—who all squabbled over who was getting the best angle. The King knows all this to be true, as he didn’t move a muscle throughout the melee that followed, and had nothing else to do but watch. That first step down was a doozy of a drop, and by now his legs were so stiff that they would have snapped like pencils had he

attempted it. And besides, there were already enough heroes in that draw. Eventually, enough vicious elbowing and strong talk got everyone the angle they desired, and some peaceful photography of the placid snake ensued. The King knew that this would go on for at least half an hour, leaving him to herp in peace. After all, his mission was not yet fulfilled. Where there was one *horridus*, there could be more. He began scouring the lower flank of the massive structure that we were following. The place was packed with all manner of openings, from narrow clefts to cavernous openings. The King checked them all, the results of which were akin to one hand clapping.

Meanwhile, the Guide had duly inscribed the *horridus* in his omnipresent notebook, and decided to slip out of the overcrowded conditions of the dry streambed. Seeing that the King had the cliff base covered, he forged ahead along a contour below it, and within five minutes scored yet another *horridus*. Damn! The King had been close, *so* close, twice now—and locals were sopping up all of *his* birthright! As the group began to gather around the new find, he lashed out: “Yuh know, really good guides let their guests do all the finding!” The Hobbit nipped this kind of behavior in the bud by exclaiming “Hey, leave them alone!” The King realized that the Hobbit was right, and shut up—proving that there *is* a first time for everything. He also knew that any further outbursts would result with the Hobbit jumping down his throat with both horny, hairy appendages that could only be called feet because of their location at the end of his squat, simian legs. That would not only hurt, it would taste awful! Yech!

The Guide’s *horridus* was much smaller than the first, perhaps 375–450 mm total length (the estimated length will forever be a bone of contention with the group). The rattle was the button only, indicating it to be neonate—but a large one at that. It had been found on the crawl on rather open forest floor, and was cooperative for the photos that followed. The King is guessing this one to be a male—although that has yet to be cleared with his strongly opinionated friends. (Whose opinions don’t matter much. After all, they *were* trying to kill him).

The young *horridus* was eventually left alone to get on with his life. So was the King. The trail narrowed considerably, and the King’s five wild men companions zipped their way along that at a breakneck pace. Once again, the unfortunate tail-gunner tried to hoof where they didn’t, until such point as he was neck deep in an impenetrable briar patch of sapling trees, thorny vines, and poison ivy. He had no choice but to backtrack out of that, and make the climb back up to the trail that his now erstwhile herp buddies had followed. A couple of manly bellows ensued, with only the sounds of silence in response. They had dropped him like a soiled hanky. Friendless, the exasperated King amused himself by checking all the narrowest of crevices in the expanse of the limestone that the trail followed. He was looking for that possible hatchling Ratsnake or Greensnake that the others might have missed. His reward for that effort was a gray-colored treefrog, which led him to believe that he had found a Gray Treefrog. Much later, the group dismissed this puny prize, saying that Gray Treefrogs are rare, and the find was something far less impressive. And here the King errantly thought that *nothing* could be less impressive than finding a

Gray Treefrog in a rock crevice! How a thumb-nail sized, single-celled piece of protoplasmic ooze like a Gray Treefrog could register higher on the herpetological Richter Scale than any other herpetological specimen will forever be a mystery. Whatever manner of herp that may be, it wouldn't be worth finding!

Meanwhile, it was now 1:00 in the afternoon. We had been hiking, mostly downhill, for exactly three and a half hours. The edict issued at the vehicles had been: "If we get separated, meet back here at 2:00." We were now facing minimally a 3½-hour hike back, uphill the whole way, and those crazy bastards were still moving away from the meeting spot! The King was running on empty, and he entertained thoughts of turning around and heading back. But no, that would be a very amateur thing to do. It is improper hiking etiquette to just leave a group without proper notification. That often results in the group that is left behind spending hours scouring the countryside while seeking a lost comrade. Nothing is worse than blundering about the serene bowels of Mother Nature bellowing out the name of some idiot who is deemed lost. Especially when the idiot who is considered lost is thirsting to death, waiting for a vehicle to be unlocked so that he can get to the cooler. And so, the considerate King bucked up, and began to double-time it along the narrow trail. While in the midst of his toy soldier trot, an adult Cottonmouth was viewed heading his direction. Upon noting that a large and wobbly human was approaching, said Cottonmouth stood his ground, cocked his head up, and gaped in most menacing fashion. But once 245 pounds of quivering mass, not an ounce of it muscle, is rolling along, there is no stopping it. The King used his snake hook to pole vault over top of it, and continued onward without a backward glance. This no doubt left the hapless snake wondering "What the heck was *that*?"

Eventually, the group was observed clustered about an opening in the cliff base. Cameras were out and flashing, and the Guide was scribbling something in his notebook. Paparazzi pointed to a classic, deep running crevice in the limestone, and bid the King to check it out. Sure enough, the various bands of orange and beige flanks of a Copperhead were viewed. It was coiled snugly roughly a meter deep, looking out at us. It was a breathtaking sight (Figure 6). The King explained the situation. He was heading back. The group wanted to continue onward



Figure 6. "Paparazzi pointed to a classic, deep running crevice in the limestone, and bid the King to check it out. Sure enough, the various bands of orange and beige flanks of a Copperhead were viewed. It was coiled snugly roughly a meter deep, looking out at us." Image by Paparazzi.

just a little bit further, and bade the King to wait by the stream crossing for their return. This was agreed upon, and the King put his back to the group.

By turning back, the King missed out on a life list snake that was found in a very atypical fashion. How the King managed to be born and raised in Northern Illinois without ever personally finding a Red-bellied Snake is unclear. He kept many, and even had some give birth while under his care. But to this very day, he has never found one. A trip to the wild vacant lots of Illinois is in order. Meanwhile, the Guide spied one crawling out from a split in the trunk of a fallen tree. This particular Red-bellied Snake was the tan colored variety, approximately 35 cm long, an adult. It was crawling horizontal to the ground, roughly 60 cm above it. The only other person to witness this was Paparazzi, who made the find count by getting a stellar image (Figure 7)

Meanwhile, roughly five minutes into the King's hike, a splendid young male Eastern Box Turtle was viewed standing proudly alongside the trail. He had just emerged from a cleft in the limestone, and seemed totally unconcerned with the presence of the human interloper. And then came the Cottonmouths. Bang! Here was gaily colored juvenile crawling toward him. Bang! Another one, poised nicely on top of a log. Bang! Another one, crawling away from him. Bang! Another one, a large adult, hanging half out of a tight opening in the bedrock. While this was occurring, scads of Fowler's Toads of all size classes began hopping about. And the sudden realization that all that was ahead would now be the visual property of the King sunk in. Oh, no! He was having *fun*.

Upon entering the area where the two *horridus* were encountered, he slowed down, and began scouring the vicinity thoroughly. Since he was now convinced that he would *never* find a *horridus* on his own, a recapture would be the next best thing. Up and down, and round and round went he, checking bases of boulders and downed logs. He even crawled about in the leaf litter, fishing for a *horridus*, using his fingers as bait. Nothing! The sound of voices approaching from behind warned him that he would soon be sharing his world with the others again. He had tarried a bit too long seeking his recapture. He started to move ahead again, when the Hobbit hollered "*horridus!*" There



Figure 7. "Meanwhile, the Guide spied one crawling out from a split in the trunk of a fallen tree. This particular Red-bellied Snake (*Storeria occipitomaculata*) was the tan colored variety, approximately 35 cm long, an adult. It was crawling horizontal to the ground, roughly 60 cm above it." Image by Paparazzi.

was no recourse left but to turn back and admire the find with the rest.

The King was first to arrive at the Hobbit's side. The finder of the *horridus* pointed to a smallish male laying straight out of a cleft in the limestone. It was cryptically lying on a bed of dried leaves. It was damn good spotting on the part of the Hobbit, who was justifiably proud of his achievement. The remainder of the group gathered around, and the photography began. Midway through that process, the astute observers of nature recognized that this was not a new, third *horridus*, but rather, the second one that the Guide had found earlier. It had moved quite a distance since the first encounter. Thus, the first-ever (and only) recapture of our day-long *horridus* study had just ensued. It was a momentous occasion, and the fact that the Hobbit's find was a rerun did nothing to diminish the importance of it.

At the point in time that the King rejoined the gathering around the recapture, he had seen 22 Cottonmouths. When he reported this to the group, they scoffed him. "No way" said they. First, they scoff his Gray Treefrog, and then, they deny him his Cottonmouths? If he had wanted to make something up, he would invent something better than Cottonmouths! But whether the group believed him or not, the truth was that they had certainly seen some of the same snakes, and those had been part of the official count of the Guide. The squabble was settled when all agreed that the Guide's count was an accurate "minimum" count. Anything more than what the Guide had inscribed were just bonus points, to be guessed at later. The King confesses that while he has earned the reputation of taking detailed notes, he had left his notebook back at the vehicle. He was on vacation, dammit! And who would have known that on this glorious day, as a group, we would see over a hundred snakes?

We left our recapture to get on with his life, and once again entered Cottonmouth central. The Flash pointed out a large adult coiled in the root cavity of a downed tree. The Guide spotted four more arboreal in a tangled stretch of vines and trees on the south side of that barn sized boulder mentioned earlier. And below them, still a flat tire draped over a log, was our behemoth of all Cottonmouths—the 30-year-old wonder. What a magnificent, bad to the bone beast! We eventually reached the stream crossing, and without hesitation, the King blazed across. He gave pause for long enough to photograph the others crossing, and then kept moving. He first checked on the Cottonmouth that had been basking on top of the pool on our way out. That one had cleared out. The King then headed directly across the open, leaf-littered forest floor for that portion of bluff that had contained our first Copperhead. As he drew close to said bluff, he experienced what *had* to be a hallucination. He rubbed his eyes, and *then* . . .

And then the King becomes Roger Repp again. In other words, for the next few paragraphs, this author drops the haughty pseudonym that he has adopted for this article. There is no way to describe what lay before me through a third person narrative. As impossible as it seemed, a lifelong dream, a dubious milestone over 50 years in the making, was now behind me. I can thank the Mighty Snotlocker River in flood stage for that. I can thank my companions for every move that they made, which in turn dictated and orchestrated my every move in return. I can even thank my mother for giving me birth. But most of all, I

thank that meter long *dandy* of a Timber Rattlesnake for choosing to be on the crawl directly in the center of my path.

The spotting of this awesome snake wasn't going to earn me any prizes in the difficult-to-see category. It stood out like goat turds in the milking pail. The first idiot to walk past it was going to see it, and the first idiot did. So obvious was this one that I saw it from over 10 meters away. I'm convinced that it also saw me at the same time, for it froze in mid-crawl, and remained motionless. There it lay in a long and lazy S shape, on open ground, among a few sprigs of young plants, on top of scattered leaves and the ash-gray swath of soil that lined the base of the towering cliff above. He was the silver surfer of the rattlesnake world. His base coloration, from snout to 60% down his shimmering body was indeed silver. He actually glimmered in the sun, like the flanks of a salmon swimming in a stream. My camera was out from the second I laid eyes on him, and I approached him slowly, stopping to fire away with each measured step. The closer I got, the more the details of the pattern came into focus. The black, chevron-shaped saddles that ran along the spine were well-defined, and encircled with fine white lines—as if they were carefully highlighted by a pin striping artist. Less defined grayish-black blotches peppered with white scales extended from the vent upward. On the front half of the snake, the lower side blotches stopped just short of joining the saddles wrapping around from the top. Toward the rear, these lower blotches met with the top saddles, forming jagged black bands that morphed into symmetrical rings toward the rear. These rings darkened in color, each highlighted by narrow white stripes to either side. The last two inches of tail was entirely black, and capped with a string of eight tapered rattles, the ninth rattle was broken. A narrow, rusty orange stripe ran along the backbone, from the nape of the neck toward the tail, breaking up the black velvet coloration of the upper chevrons. The chunky, angular head was mostly silver, and two rust-orange eye stripes that were narrow through the eyes, and wider toward the jaw added a tasteful splash of geometry and color to his visage (Figure 8).

Oh, what a feeling! Take me back—I want to be there again. I was enthused, pumped, stoked, fired up and rocking! I was the guy who hits that walk-off home run in the World Series, or makes the game-saving tackle, or that impossible winning touch-



Figure 8. The third Timber Rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*) of the day, photographed in situ. "As impossible as it seemed, a lifelong dream, a dubious milestone over 50 years in the making, was now behind me." Image by Paparazzi. (See also the front cover of this *Bulletin*.)

down catch in the biggest of games. But those are mere sporting events. This was better than any sports hero crap. Bravo to the snake, and more than luck than brains with the person who found it. In a lifetime of finding snakes, there have been many such moments as this. That first Animas Ridge-nosed Rattlesnake found on Dave Barker's study site in the San Luis Mountains of Mexico comes to mind. As does that first Gila Monster ambling on open ground, or that Mountain Kingsnake sprawled in the leaf litter—what a sight! My first Arizona Ridge-nosed Rattlesnake was an orgasmic experience of nearly religious proportions. But this Timber Rattlesnake topped all of that, better even than all the previous best finds combined together.

Upon my return to Arizona, I was relaying the excitement that this find generated to my friend Patti Mahaney. As I went on and on, she began shaking her head in disbelief. Right while I was in mid-boast, she began to giggle. "But Roger," she remonstrated, "these things are dirt common. It's the first wild snake that I ever saw." At first I bristled, and was about to put the whammy on her. I wanted to say: "Well—pin a rose on your nose, Patti Mahaney! You are off my Christmas Card list! What were you doing when I found my first Copperhead? Were you a little bitty tadpole swimming about inside your daddies naughty parts, inquiring directions to the nearest fallopian tube? And when I found my first rattlesnake, did you have a pretty pink tricycle? Did you pull your little red wagon with it? Which Barbie doll was your favorite—the blonde?" But no, I just nodded, and said "I know." Yes, I *know* that they can be common. As stated in the beginning of part 1 of this column, I could have easily found one over twenty years ago. I was playing my first Timber Rattlesnake in a very stubborn fashion, and all that it cost me was time as a result. There was no way to make her understand that I was approaching this particular life list snake with an infinite amount of patience. I didn't want it to be over with right away. I wanted something to live for, to strive for. I didn't realistically expect it to happen. The words in the early goings of part 1 of this article describe it all nicely. They were written ten years before they were ever put in print. Why was this particular snake such a big deal?

Because "*anybody* can be lead by the hand to the Promised Land. Nope, I wanted to do this *horridus* thing the hard way—my way! I wanted to be with friends who are special to me. I wanted to pick the spot—not have the spot chosen for me. The spot I chose was my own home state, sweet home Illinois. And if I ever did find a Timber Rattlesnake there, I would be in a good place, with good people, seeking a cool snake."

And now, it's time to go back to that good place, along with the good people—not to mention the cool snake. After no short duration of time, the King hollered out his find. His friends were still in the process of rebooting after the stream crossing, but began trickling over one by one. Soon, the whole group was gathered around the snake, which still had not moved a muscle since freezing. Everybody got to see it in situ before we closed in for closer photography. Only then did he coil and rattle, and many defensive behaviors were then documented. By the end of the photo shoot, the snake had calmed down, and had come to rest at the trunk of a hackberry tree. The results of the cooperative effort between snake and man are on the cover of this issue.

We moved on, leaving my common dream snake in peace. Almost immediately, the Hobbit spotted a Copperhead slipping into a crevice, roughly ten feet above us. Seeing the escaping snake brought on the herper's instinct to chase, and the Hobbit went barreling up the cliff face like an inept ape to get a photo. In a case of monkey see, monkey do, the others did the same, also looking like inept apes in the process. This snake was big, but by far the most dog ugly Copperhead any of us had ever collectively seen. Any photos we got were best suited for the delete button. The King made haste to put his back to it. Good riddance! Copperheads are normally gorgeous snakes, but this one was so drab in appearance that it made the watersnakes at the Fish Farm look good!

The King's last major find of the day happened while four members of his party were still angling for the money shot of the Hobbit's worthless find. Always one to leave such affairs in the hands of those who deserve it, he slipped ahead, still seeking that first *beautiful* Copperhead viewed earlier that morning. That quest had already led him to something good. The Flash joined him as he headed up a shallow cut in the bluff. To our left were two Cottonmouths. One was a juvenile that was crawling along the cliff base, but saw us coming, flinched and then froze into a near perfect S. The other was a mid-sized adult that was crawling upslope, approaching the smaller one. At the point where the small snake froze, so did we. But cameras were ready. Meanwhile, nothing changed with the approach of the second cottonmouth. As the head of the larger snake, likely a male, approached the tail of the smaller, he began a series of tongue flicks. The tongue was actually lightly touching the tail of the smaller snake. The male then proceeded to go into some intermittent jerky motions, his chin rubbing the nether regions of the smaller snake. The presumed female twitched ever so slightly at this. She was possibly thinking "Are you going to mate me, eat me, or both?" The brief courtship ended when the male cocked his head upward, and noticed the enormous beer gut looming large above him. He gave one more twitch of defiance, and crawled past the small snake and into a deep soil cavern in the embankment. At first, the King was concerned that the larger might eat the smaller. You never know—these Cottonmouths are really something! "Mate me or eat me or both?" All were highly possible scenarios (Figure 9).



Figure 9. This pair of Cottonmouths displayed a very brief period of courtship. "Are you going to mate me, eat me, or both?" Image by the King.

It was decided that since the group had not yet begun to kill the King, taking the long way back via a loop trail to the vehicles might work. By this point, the Guide was in on the plan. The Flash was guilty only by association, as he was only doing what he always does. One might think that the occasional sonic booms that followed him while he zipped along the trail might be disruptive, but he didn't seem to mind. The trail we were following looped around the first series of bluffs that we had started to herp earlier. We followed this trail until such point as we reached the southern outskirts of Kankakee, and then hooked into a slot canyon that would eventually take us to the famed Booger Hollow parking lot. The Flash jetted up the center of the trail in the slot canyon, while my four other companions followed slowly along and combed the flanking bluff to our right. The King found a place where this bluff closed in on the trail, and waited to see what they might find. They scored a few more Cottonmouths, which the King was not inspired in the least to see.

They all eventually trickled down, and after a brief water break, we started to follow the Flash up the trail. The King was still riding high over his big find of the day. It was the best of times. And then suddenly, it was the worst of times. A powerful contraction occurred in his upper left inner thigh. The flabby muscles there sent an immediate message to the brain on high. Their message was clear: "Send in the pain receptors." The brain reacted quickly, opening the floodgates to a Mongol horde of sword wielding pain minions that immediately began to hack their way through the King's thigh, from the inside outward. In short, it was the mother lode of a leg cramp, and so severe was the pain that the King bellowed.

The King is no stranger to leg cramps. He gets about one a month. Sometimes in the calf, which are always bad, but the thigh cramps are the worst. They mostly come at night, when he is sleeping. When they hit, the King is ready for them. He keeps a bottle of quinine on his bed stand, as well as a bean bag that can be tossed into a microwave oven. The worst of cramps are behind him in less than five minutes. But out here, there was no quinine, and no bean bag, let alone a microwave oven. He often wondered about the ramifications of that worst case scenario: a major cramp hitting when he was *miles* from civilization. He was about to find out.

The concerned group flocked around him. He was so locked up in pain that he was afraid to move. He looked at the Guide and asked "How far do we have to go?" The Guide didn't pull any punches with his answer: "We have a *long* way to go." There were three choices: die there, call in the choppers, or limp out. The King made the first step, causing the pain minions to rally in a frenzy of sword wielding lust. Then came the next step, and the next, and slow but sure, we were on the move again. For that long walk that followed, there were always two people behind him, and two in front. When the going got vertical, there were always two strong arms pulling him up, and two hands grabbing a handful from behind and shoving. Right at the steepest part of the hike, a majestic and colorful Cottonmouth appeared, emerging from a cavernous opening of a cave in the limestone. The sight was so impressive that even the suffering King took some photos. The trail smoothed out some after the grueling climb past the Cottonmouth, and the cramp began to

dissipate. The King was saying to the Guide "I think it's going away." Right in the middle of that sentence, wham! It was the same thing all over again, but this time, it was in the right thigh. There was nothing to do but continue on. When we reached the top of the ridgeline, the canopy opened up, and we could see all the way to the Mississippi River and beyond. A series of benches were laid out so that the casual hiker could sit and view the magnificent surroundings. Perched on one of those benches were two lovely ladies of the forest, who beckoned us to join them. Knowing that if he sat down, he might not be able to get back up, the King just waved them off and continued on. At the point where two lost loves were so abruptly dismissed forever, the trail leveled out. Tarzan and Paparazzi rushed ahead, promising to fetch us some beer and return. Two forevers later, they appeared, a bottle of Dos Equis was put in the King's hand, and suddenly, he was well again. The hike was finished with the style in which the King has become accustomed.

We hauled the cooler from Tarzan's vehicle, and gathered around a convenient picnic table to discuss the events of the day. The Guide gathered up the numbers from his notebook. His count for the snakes was as follows: 59 snakes total, 47 Cottonmouths, 4 Copperheads, 3 Timber Rattlesnakes. The finding of all three species of hots in one day was considered a trifecta in these parts, and the fact that there were multiples of all only increased the magnitude of the herpetological hat trick. Additionally, 1 Rough Greensnake, 1 Black Racer, 1 Plain-bellied Watersnake, 1 Red-bellied Snake and a Common Gartersnake were also found. But as agreed upon earlier, The Guide's count, albeit accurate to the best of his ability, did not include anything that we didn't report.

If everybody had been as diligent as the Guide in recording their finds, the numbers would have soared. Much later, Tarzan claimed to have seen over 100 snakes. The King believes him.

However many snakes we saw should have been enough. The Flash certainly thought so, and departed with the promise to join us the next day. There next ensued a powwow around the vehicles. "What to do next?" One powerful voice of reason said "Take me back to the cabin. I want my quinine. I want my hot tub. I have had *enough* of this day!" With absolutely zero deference to the King's wishes, all remaining members of the party voted unanimously to grab a gut buster meal, and then assail another canyon for a nocturnal hunt to seek Cave Salamanders. There was no longer any doubt in the King's mind. They *were* keeping him hostage, and they *were* trying to kill him. All of the consideration shown on the hike out of the bowels of Booger Hollow was merely a ploy to keep him alive a little longer, so that they could continue to inflict pain upon him. But food was a good idea, and we were joined for that occasion by the Guide's better half, the Professor. Unlike the other members of our party, she was good company. But for whatever reason, she could not join us for the Cave Salamander adventure that followed. Wise decision! A long drive and a short nocturnal hike found us facing a deep grotto in a limestone wall. Scattered about the walls of the grotto were several Long-tailed and Cave Salamanders, the latter which were colored bright orange with black spots. Whatever mission they were on didn't seem to be much, as they were mostly laying still. Two large and nasty-looking

spiders were on patrol on these walls. Their size was daunting. They could have completely covered a silver dollar, and had all eight legs hanging over the perimeter. For want of a name, these spiders earned the moniker “BASES” from the King. (BASES being an acronym for “Bad Ass Salamander-Eating Spiders.”) Indeed, their presence might have given some purpose to the listless salamanders viewed on the grotto walls. Maybe they were there to feed the spiders, which was as good a use as any for the likes of them. But for every obvious sacrificial salamander that was out and about, there were several that were hiding. The walls of the grotto were peppered with holes and crevices, many of which were occupied by Cave and Long-tailed Salamanders (Figure 10).

The remainder of the evening is a bit of a blur, as the total lack of enthusiasm for this miserable and pointless adventure caused the King to lapse into a coma. Said coma lasted all the way back to the cabins, the hot tub, and well into the night. The coma then morphed into a terrible dream. In this nightmare, we were all Cave Salamanders, stuffed into a slimy grotto crevice that was too tight for all of us to fit. It was a dream that imitated life, for guess who got shoved out to feed the spiders?

4 October 2016—Snake Road and Beyond

We ate breakfast. The Guide joined us. That’s the end of that story. We headed in two vehicles to indulge in a tin flipping festival at a place called the Pig Farm. That could have and should have been a herpetological turkey shoot, but it was a bust. Good! Flipping tin is by far the lowest form of herping. The King hopes he never participates in that brainless act again, but he probably will. We then piled into the vehicles and proceeded toward the north end of Snake Road. Paparazzi was riding with the Guide, who was leading the charge with his mighty red Corolla. Tarzan piloted the second chariot, with the Hobbit riding shotgun. The King was riding with all of his friends (he was alone) in the backseat of this vehicle. We were barreling along the smooth gravel road at roughly 50 miles per hour. Suddenly, Tarzan and the Hobbit hollered “Snake!” in unison, and the vehicle slid to a billowing, dusty halt. The Hobbit hopped out, and returned holding a freshly killed Brownsnake. The poor thing could not have been any longer than 125 mm, and maybe 3 mm in diameter. Yegads! That was as good of

spotting as the King has ever seen, in a lifetime of road cruising with good spotters. He willingly chose the back seat for the remainder of the trip. With eyes like these up front, that is where he belonged! We parked the Guide’s vehicle in the Wilderness Pond Parking area, noting with some dismay that several other vehicles were parked there as well. Despite the fact that it was a Tuesday, we would be sharing the Snake Road with others. The five of us then piled into Tarzan’s vehicle, and headed for the parking spot at the south end of the road. It was there that we met the Flash.

It is difficult to imagine that any member of the Chicago Herpetological Society would not be familiar with the famed “Snake Road” of Shawnee National Forest. An excellent technical description of the place, written by the loving hands of the Guide, appears in the aforementioned “Snakes of Snake Road” article, on page 1 of the January 2016 issue of the *Bulletin*. In short, there is a 4 kilometer long dirt road that bisects the eastern edge of a vast wetland and the western edge of an extensive ridge of limestone cliffs. During the spring of each year, many manners of herp migrate from the bluffs to the swamp. And in the fall, they return. Some of Illinois’ finest and forward thinking minds noted that herps were getting slaughtered by traffic during these migratory periods, and closed the road to vehicular traffic in the peak seasons. Collecting as well as collecting equipment has also been outlawed there, but signs indicate that foot traffic is welcome, and visitors are encouraged to take only pictures, and leave only footprints. It is an idea that is ecologically light years ahead of any place in this great nation of ours.

Once again, the Illinois weather gods (who can be a rather fickle lot) favored us with perfect conditions. It was sunny and room temperature perfect throughout the course of the day. And what a day it was! Unlike the grueling, balls to the wall, all out herp ‘til yuh drop Booger Hollow horror show of the previous day, this was to be a day to stop and smell the roses kind of affair. At no point did the King entertain notions that he wanted this day to end. It was just slow and easy walking on a very flat and level sandy two track road. Still basking in the herpetological afterglow of the torrential outpouring of finds made the day before, he enjoyed every bit of whatever came his way. If a frog came bounding past, he would stalk it with camera at ready. Every Cottonmouth that came his way—and there were many, was treated as if it was the last he would ever see. To his left were the placid waters of the LaRue Swamp, to his right, the towering chalk white Illinois version of the cliffs of Dover.

While the King happily stuck with whatever the road would bring him, his companions scattered about the bluffs. With them, it wasn’t a herping trip unless they were knocking themselves out with effort. For the most part, the King had the road to himself. But if he tarried too long in any spot, one or more members of the party would be viewed ahead. Early on in the hike, the Hobbit emerged from the undergrowth to report a Copperhead he had found. Or maybe we should say, a frog found for him. He was following a candy-lime green leopard frog as it hopped about, trying to get an image of it. The frog eventually landed in one spot and remained still. With no small measure of excitement, the Hobbit noticed that it had plopped down along side of brilliantly colored Copperhead that was



Figure 10. A pair of Long-tailed Salamanders (*Eurycea longicauda*) peering out of a crevice. “The walls of the grotto were peppered with holes and crevices, many of which were occupied by Cave and Long-tailed Salamanders.” Image by Paparazzi.

coiled in the tall grass beside the road. Others soon joined the scene, and photographed the find as well. They left everything as found, and returned six hours later. The Copperhead was still there, and had been joined by another! But wait, there is more! It was a classic case of “now you don’t see it, later you do!” When Paparazzi was going through his images that night, he noted that this second Copperhead had been there all along, right from the time that the Hobbit saw the first (Figure 11). This proves that our cameras can, at times, be better herpers than we are.

At one point in the hike, we had somehow managed to gather as group again on the road. While peering into a vine-laden bush, Paparazzi stole the show by spotting an adult Rough Greensnake. It lay cryptically in a lazy U-shape, roughly 1 meter up in the bush, coiled amongst some vines that were exactly the same color as the snake (Figure 12). Not to be outdone, a short time later, the Hobbit repeated the performance by finding yet another Rough Greensnake in the same sort of situation. It was at this point that the King came to the realization that he was not herping with mere mortals, but rather, snake-finding machines!

And so on and on we went, sometimes together, sometimes scattered about, but it always seemed somebody was finding a snake at any given point in time. We were not the only ones scoring. At one point, there was a giant of an affable looking old fellow with a much younger woman, staring at the grass in the middle of the two track road. As we approached, the couple pointed out a Brownsnake, roughly 30 cm long, that had been on the crawl. Like everybody else we encountered on the road this day, the couple was friendly and courteous, obviously enjoying every minute of the pleasant surroundings that we were immersed in. A young buck who came our way showed us an image of a gaudily-colored neonate Copperhead coiled on top of some leaf litter. He said that it was still there when he left it, and did his best to tell us where it was. We of course burned over a thousand horsepower of energy seeking it, to no avail. Toward the very end of the northbound hike, Tarzan and the King bumped into two other folk who had just seen a Timber Rattlesnake. They pointed in the direction that they had seen it, and Tarzan began to thoroughly pump them for information that might lead us to it. The neonate Copperhead incident had drained the King of all desire to try to follow nebulous directions to a find. Hence, he dropped all notions of paying attention



Figure 11. Now you don’t see it, later you do! Arrow points to head of a second Copperhead that went unnoticed at the time this photograph was taken. Note also the nearby froggie. See text for details. Image by Paparazzi.



Figure 12. Rough Greensnake (*Opheodrys aestivus*) in situ—some good spotting from Snake Road. “It lay cryptically in a lazy U-shape, roughly a meter up in the bush, coiled amongst some vines that were exactly the same color as the snake! . . . The King came to the realization that he was not herping with mere mortals, but rather, snake-finding machines!” Image by the King.

while Tarzan conducted his interrogation. The gist of it all was that we were to look for a log pile just ten feet to the right of the road, and there we would find our prize. The very notion that there might be a *horridus* ahead stoked fire inside the King’s zealous companion, and off he went to seek it in a frenzy of herpetological lust. The King’s faith in his fellow man was not as strong as that of Tarzan. He could visualize two guys down the road yucking it up while gloating “We really pulled a fast one on those two schmuks, didn’t we? I wonder how long those two idiots will circle that log pile looking for nothing?” The presumed correct log pile was found. Tarzan circled it several times, like a starving buzzard on the scent of something dead that couldn’t be seen. The King half-heartedly circled the log pile once, and continued on his way.

He was the first to reach the Wilderness Pond Parking area. His heart sank into helpless despair when he gazed at the trunk of the Guide’s Corolla, knowing that rivers of beer were locked up inside. It was a case of “beer, beer everywhere, nor any a drop to drink.” No small amount of time was spent applying amateur locksmith techniques to the stubborn lock on that trunk. But Japanese engineering was far too clever for the hapless and exhausted drunk to fathom. Just as he was considering bashing his way in with his forehead, the group began to trickle in. Of course, the man with the keys was the last to arrive. But no, that’s not quite right. The man with the keys was the second to the last to arrive. Amazingly gullible and determined, Tarzan was still circling that log pile. As each person drifted into the parking lot, they gave eye witness accounts of a crazed, bigfoot-like creature viewed going ‘round and ‘round a pile of logs while muttering to itself in earnest. The trunk was opened, and the first brave soldier had fully yielded its bodily contents. And then, in the distance, the sound of fists thumping against a manly chest could be heard. All the serenity of the surroundings rapidly dissipated as a thunderous voice bellowed in beast-like fashion. The cry sounded like a drawn out series of wavering “Ahs” and “Ohs,” and was produced twice, each lasting well over a minute in duration. And then we all knew—Tarzan had scored that elusive *horridus* (Figure 13)!



Figure 13. A winner never quits, and a quitter never wins. Acting on a nebulous tip, Tarzan rooted about in a log pile for nearly a half-hour before making the find. This is a neonate female Timber Rattlesnake that is off to a good start in life. Note the hefty food bolus distending her flanks. A good meal like this will certainly sustain her through hibernation, and give her a good start next spring. Image by Paparazzi.

Please Make it Stop! (The Wrap-up)

At this point in the narrative, the King is wondering how many readers are still with him? If you are one of those, be advised that if you read part 1, you slugged your way through over 18,000 words. You all deserve a purple heart for what you have endured thus far. The fact is, it would take another 18,000 to adequately describe all that followed after Tarzan's hard-earned Timber Rattlesnake. The King is able and willing to proceed, but unlike his herptomaniac companions, he will show you mercy. Mother Nature put on quite a show for us, from the minute we started, until the very last minutes at the end of it all. The weather factors, the timing, and the relentless Gung Ho attitudes of those who scoured the countryside seeking any and all of Her offerings made for the perfect storm. It was a herpetological adventure of epic and orgasmic proportions. In some ways, to *not* finish this article in the same style it started is to show a small measure of disrespect for the whole of it. But enough is enough, and sometimes too much. It is time to wrap this up. We will see if we can finish the remainder of this trip in three paragraphs. We will start with this author dropping his ridiculous and pompous self-imposed title of the King. As bad a situation as it is, I just want to be Roger Repp again.

We of course did another southbound trek on the Snake Road. We of course found, among other things, another Copperhead, many more Cottonmouths, a big old nasty Black Ratsnake, and got another look at the Copperhead pairing mentioned earlier. Upon our arrival at the south parking lot, we bid the Flash farewell for good—at least for this visit. We then drove to the top of the Pine Hills, and witnessed a spectacular sunset. While driving back down, we encountered three more Copperheads. Two had been freshly hit, mangled beyond any hope of



Figure 14. The best road snake of the trip. This young adult Copperhead was viewed and subsequently photographed well after darkness had set in, on our ride down from the top of Pine Hills. Image by Paparazzi.

recovery. Glad we were to get some images of a living and handsome mid-sized one before seeing it safely off the road (Figure 14).

The next day, we did one of those damnable Illinois hikes that start at the top of a bluff, and end at the bottom. We racked up some impressive snake and box turtle numbers in the process. But the most exciting part of this effort was entering an old building that was absolutely infested with Rafinesque's Big-eared Bats (*Corynorhinus rafinesquii*). They dangled upside down from the rafters in bunches, gnashing their verminous little snappers at us. The very last snake that the King saw on this trip was an adult Black Racer that was sprawled out in the grass beside the trail. It remained there, uncharacteristically cooperative for the photos that followed. When we got back to the top, we bid the Guide farewell, and then those crazy fools went back down for more. I remained up top, following a level trail that offered excellent vistas of heavily forested bluffs. When I got back to the parking lot, I witnessed three totally exhausted herpers. By golly, there *are* limits to their endurance! I even tried to cajole them into making another stop at a place called Heron Pond, but they were having none of it.

I'm almost sad to say that try as hard as they did, my friends did not kill me. But, hey! Everybody deserves a second chance. We are already in the early planning phases of our next adventure. Part of it involves skydiving off the top of a cliff—without a parachute! According to my herp buddies, there are updrafts that allow one to just float down and land as light as a feather. I have come to the conclusion that they *must* truly love me, for they have promised to let me go first!

This here is Roger Repp, signing off from Southern Arizona, where the turtles are strong, the snakes are handsome, and the lizards are all above average.

What You Missed at the November Meeting

John Archer
j-archer@sbcglobal.net

Humans are a species driven by stories. One doesn't have to be a postdoc in anthropology to accept that. Stories are how we exchange information, pass on traditions, and change minds. They're the bond that allows us to feel part of the tribe. They take us to places we'll never see in person, allow us glimpses into possible futures, and let us share another's thoughts. They are ubiquitous and impossible to avoid in any social setting. They can be long or short. And they can be helpful or hurtful.

Few people know this as well as our November speaker. Dr. Martha L. Crump flew in from Logan, Utah, where she is an adjunct professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at Utah State University. She is a tropical ecologist who studies the behavior, ecology and conservation of amphibians. She's written dozens of scientific papers, and coauthored a textbook on herpetology. She's well known in the field of herpetology, and in 1997 received the Distinguished Herpetologist Award from the Herpetologists' League. But Marty also writes for a general audience. She's



Marty Crump

written magazine articles and several books, and although she didn't mention it, her talk at our meeting centered on her latest book, *Eye of Newt and Toe of Frog, Adder's Fork and Lizard's Leg: the Lore and Mythology of Amphibians and Reptiles*. You might be interested in acquiring that book. Marty has given CHS members a code that they can use to purchase the book at a 30% discount from the University of Chicago Press; use PR30CRUMP. You might find some of her other books to your interest while you're there. Or you can find them on Amazon.

Marty opened with a lament that most of us know. Everyone loves the cute and charismatic. Research funding is comparatively easy to acquire and public support for conservation nearly universal for pandas or dolphins. Most of us who are into herps also appreciate those animals, but reptiles and amphibians face biases that limit their appeal and too often leave funding for research lagging far behind the animal stars. Herps are too often seen as ugly or threatening or simply boring. So herps have an image problem. With 32% of amphibian species and 22% of reptile species threatened with extinction, that situation needs to change so effective measures will be taken to reverse the declines.

To change minds we need to understand what those minds already think, so Marty related some folklore that reveals how different cultures feel towards reptiles and amphibians. It's rarely consistent. In different myths, frogs can symbolize happiness, rebirth, and transformation, but toads may be ugly, dirty, and associated with evil spirits. Snakes are evil, terrifying, aggressive, and deadly but might be seen coupled with life,



Frogs often symbolize happiness, rebirth, transformation, and flapper dancing. Drawing by Bronwyn McIvor.



Toads (such as this Western toad, *Anaxyrus boreas*) may be associated with ugliness, filth, and evil spirits. Photograph by R. C. Clark, Dancing Snake Nature Photography.



The giant monkey frog (*Phyllomedusa bicolor*) needs your help. Photograph by Danté Fenolio.



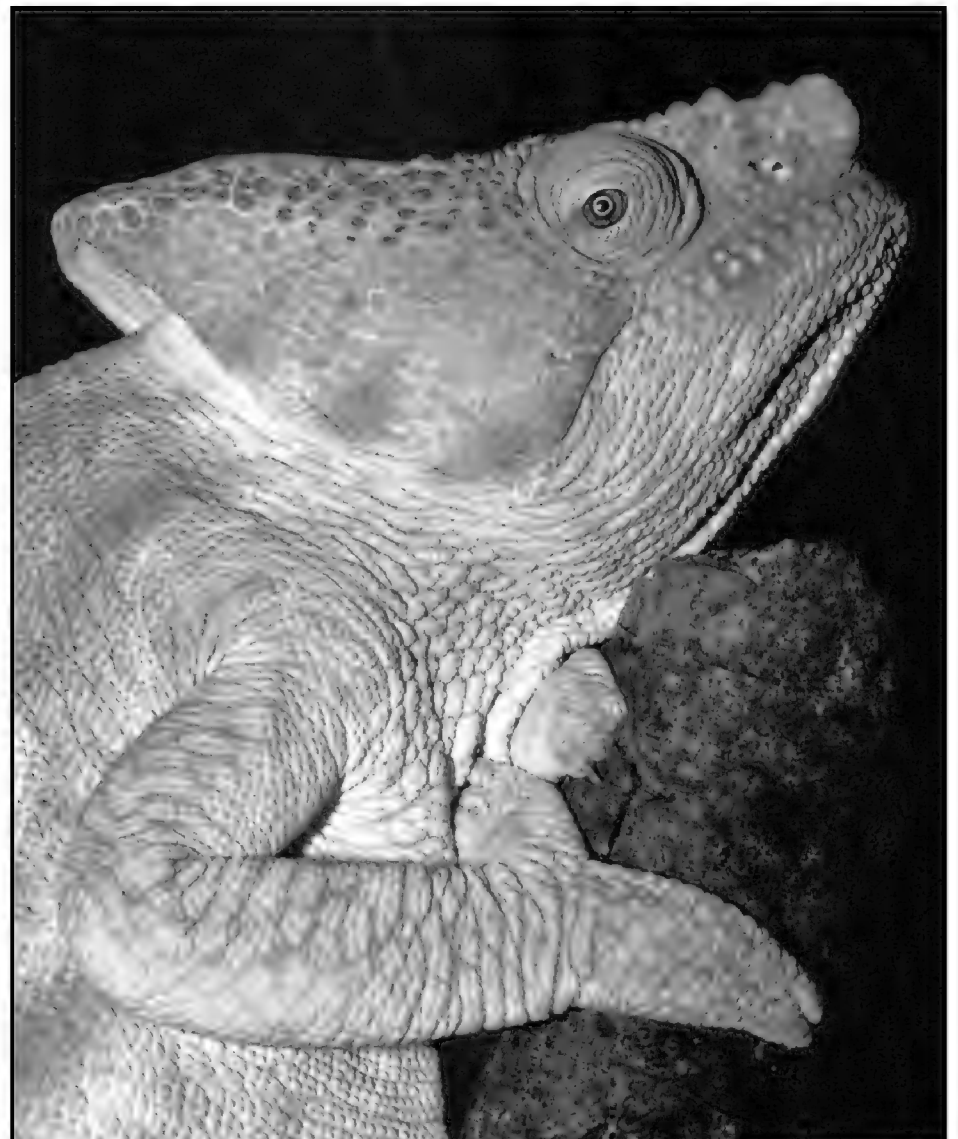
Marty elaborated on some of the myths surrounding chameleons, certainly a likely animal to encourage the imagination. Color changes, goofy walk, and swiveling eyes make them easy to mythologize. Veiled chameleon (*Chamaeleo calyptratus*). Photograph by R. C. Clark, Dancing Snake Nature Photography.



We need to stress the importance of biodiversity, including even this Cuban treefrog (*Osteopilus septentrionalis*) that certainly has a place in its original home if not as an invasive species. Photograph by Danté Fenolio.



Snakes such as this bush viper (*Atheris ceratophora*) are maligned as evil, frightening, aggressive and deadly, but in some cultures can represent life, health, longevity and fertility. Photograph by Danté Fenolio.



Those eyes generate axioms such as: "Like a chameleon, have one eye on the future and one eye on the past." Parson's chameleon (*Calumma parsonii*). Photograph by Paul Freed.

health and fertility. While many folk tales portray turtles symbolizing longevity, wisdom, strength, and endurance, some, such as the Aztecs, portrayed turtles as cowardly because they retreat into their shells in the face of danger.

Marty chose to illustrate the variety of folklore that can surround one animal by focusing a little on the chameleon. She quoted an African legend that says the Devil made chameleons from spare parts, giving the creature, “the tail of a monkey, the skin of a crocodile, the tongue of a toad, the horns of a rhinoceros, and the eyes of a who-knows-what.” With its rapid color changes, slow, goofy walk, swiveling eyes and sometimes threatening behavior, a chameleon would seem to ripe for imaginative explanations. Folk tales do not disappoint. The rapid color changes might be associated with a changeable character, one who flip-flops on issues such as politicians might, but the Dogon of Mali link the changes with rainbows. A few African tribes link the chameleon with a long life or an afterlife and blame the chameleon’s slow walk as the reason God did not grant these benefits on mankind. The chameleons are the villains in these tales and they’re killed as a result. The eyes of the lizards are referenced with axioms such as: “Walk like a chameleon. Look forward, but watch your back” or “Like a chameleon, have one eye on the future and one eye on the past.” The eyes can represent wisdom as all-seeing or all-knowing but the animal’s stare may intimidate and be feared. The grasping tail is perceived as holding too firmly and even threatening to rip skin if attempts are made to remove the animal. With their gulping air, hissing, and open-mouth displays when threatened or threat-



Turtles are usually associated with longevity, wisdom, strength and endurance, but some cultures scorn them as weak and cowardly because they retreat into their shells when frightened. Drawing by Bronwyn McIvor.



Box turtle (*Terrapene carolina*) Photograph by Joe Mitchell.

ening, the animal is assigned powers of poison or danger that reality doesn’t support.

And that’s just a small sampling of myths generated by one reptile. Many more examples show the power that reptiles and amphibians have in the thinking of many cultures. They create life, bring rain, cause natural disasters, create happiness or cause misfortune, kill or heal. Amphibian metamorphosis, snake shedding, explosive breeding and fierce threatening displays of reptiles or amphibians encourage extraordinary claims of powers and abilities for these animals.

Marty isn’t just relating tales, however. She wants us to understand the importance of these fables, or more precisely, the importance of us recognizing how different cultures view the animals we need to protect. While it seems to me that all of the speakers we’ve had talked of the importance of understanding and eliciting the help of the folks that live with the threatened species, Marty says that there are still many conservationists who want to impose their “correct” view on the inhabitants that have lived with the animals for centuries. She stressed the importance of working with the local people to conserve the biodiversity that we all need. Minds and outlooks can be changed. Marty gave two examples of successful educational programs that demonstrably changed community attitudes about threatened species.

But she did not let us off the hook. She emphasized the importance of individual efforts using what tools we have to continually work at changing attitudes of those who cannot see the importance of these animals. Photographers and artists, writers and researchers can make a difference. Societies such as your CHS help with our continuing educational shows and particularly shows like ReptileFest. Unfortunately most amphibians and reptiles live in the tropics and educational efforts are not particularly strong in those areas. While we continue to move forward with our efforts here, we need to explore means to spread our results into areas that are underserved and over threatened. You belong to one of the premier societies that promote respect and knowledge of these amazing creatures, but the society needs you. Get involved. Do shows. Teach people.

Extinction is forever.

Minutes of the CHS Board Meeting, October 14, 2016

President John Bellah called the meeting to order at 7:40 P.M. Board members Amy Bochenko, Aaron LaForge, Brandon Ottolino and Jessica Wadleigh were absent.

The minutes of the September 16 board meeting were read and accepted.

Midwest Symposium: Income and expenses (still incomplete) were reviewed. The auction was a great success. Kudos to all on the committee for the great job they did organizing it. Ways to increase attendance in the future were discussed, including more use of social media.

Officers' Reports

Membership secretary: Mike Dloogatch read the list of expiring memberships.

Sergeant-at-arms: Attendance at the September general meeting was 31.

Committees

Shows: The list of upcoming shows was reviewed. The CHS received a \$300 donation from the Brookfield Conservation Commission in recognition of participation in Meet the Creek event.

Jr. Herpers: There were 34 in attendance at the October meeting. New cards with next year's meeting dates are now available. November meeting topic is Reptiles of the World.

Old Business

Adoptions fund: Bob Bavirsha brought a list of his typical

expenses. There will be a discussion at next month's board meeting on how much to reimburse Bob, Linda Malawy and Colleen Schwarz for adoption related expenses.

Election: John Bellah has appointed a nominating committee. Deb Krohn, Andy Sagan Gavin Brink, Jessica Wadleigh are the members. Absentee ballots will be available to print from the web site.

New Business:

CHS apparel: John Bellah expressed concern that people attending meetings don't know who the board members are. He suggested short-sleeved shirts with the logo for board members to wear to the general meeting. Mike Scott suggested having name tags. It was decided that the shirts was not necessary. No decision was made regarding name tags.

Pop-up Banners: John Bellah suggested getting some pop-up banners made to bring to shows. It was noted that this idea was approved by the board several years ago but no action was taken. Mike Scott and Bob Bavirsha will explore types of banners and cost and bring the results to the next board meeting.

CHS merchandise: John Archer brought up selling items such as mugs, hats, key chains, etc. with CHS logo on them. There is an online store "Cafe Press" that can be linked to the web site and individuals can order whatever they want directly. No decision was made.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by recording secretary Teresa Savino

Advertisements

For sale: **highest quality frozen rodents.** I have been raising rodents for over 30 years and can supply you with the highest quality mice available in the U.S. These are always exceptionally clean and healthy with no urine odor or mixed in bedding. I feed these to my own reptile collection exclusively and so make sure they are the best available. All rodents are produced from my personal breeding colony and are fed exceptional high protein, low fat rodent diets; no dog food is ever used. Additionally, all mice are flash frozen and are separate in the bag, not frozen together. I also have ultra low shipping prices to most areas of the U.S. and can beat others shipping prices considerably. I specialize in the smaller mice sizes and currently have the following four sizes available: Small pink mice (1 day old—1 gm) , \$25 /100; Large pink mice (4 to 5 days old—2 to 3 gm), \$27.50 /100; Small fuzzy mice (7 to 8 days old—5 to 6 gm) , \$30/100; Large fuzzy mice / hoppers (10 to 12 days old—8 to 10 gm), \$35/100 Contact Kelly Haller at 785-234-3358 or by e-mail at kelhal56@hotmail.com

Herp tours: **Costa Rica herping adventures.** Join a small group of fellow herpers for 7 herp-filled days. We find all types of herps, mammals, birds and insects, but our target is snakes. We average 52 per trip, and this is our 10th year doing it. If you would like to enjoy finding herps in the wild and sleep in a bed at night with air-conditioning, hot water and only unpack your suitcase once, instead of daily, then this is the place to do it. Go to our web-site <http://hiss-n-things.com> and read the highlights of our trips. Read the statistics of each trip and visit the link showing photos of the 40 different species we have found along the way. E-mail at jim.kavney@gmail.com or call Jim Kavney, 305-664-2881.

Line ads in this publication are run free for CHS members — \$2 per line for nonmembers. Any ad may be refused at the discretion of the Editor. Submit ads to mdloogatch@chicagoherp.org.

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Chicago Herpetological Society will be held at 7:30 P.M., Wednesday, December 28, at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, Cannon Drive and Fullerton Parkway, in Chicago. This meeting will include the annual election of officers and members-at-large of the CHS board of directors. **The meeting will also be a holiday party.** The CHS will provide soft drinks and snacks. If you would like to bring something edible to share with the group, you are invited to do so. If you would like to bring an animal to show off to the group, you are encouraged to do that as well. This will be a chance to socialize all evening and get to know your fellow members a little better.

Alicia Beattie and Jared Bilak will be the speakers at the January 25 meeting. As graduate students at Southern Illinois University, and in cooperation with the Shedd Aquarium, Alicia and Jared have been studying the ecology of Chicago area mudpuppies in Lake Michigan and Wolf Lake.

The regular monthly meetings of the Chicago Herpetological Society take place at Chicago's newest museum—the **Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum**. This beautiful building is at Fullerton Parkway and Cannon Drive, directly across Fullerton from the Lincoln Park Zoo. Meetings are held the last Wednesday of each month, from 7:30 P.M. through 9:30 P.M. Parking is free on Cannon Drive. A plethora of CTA buses stop nearby.

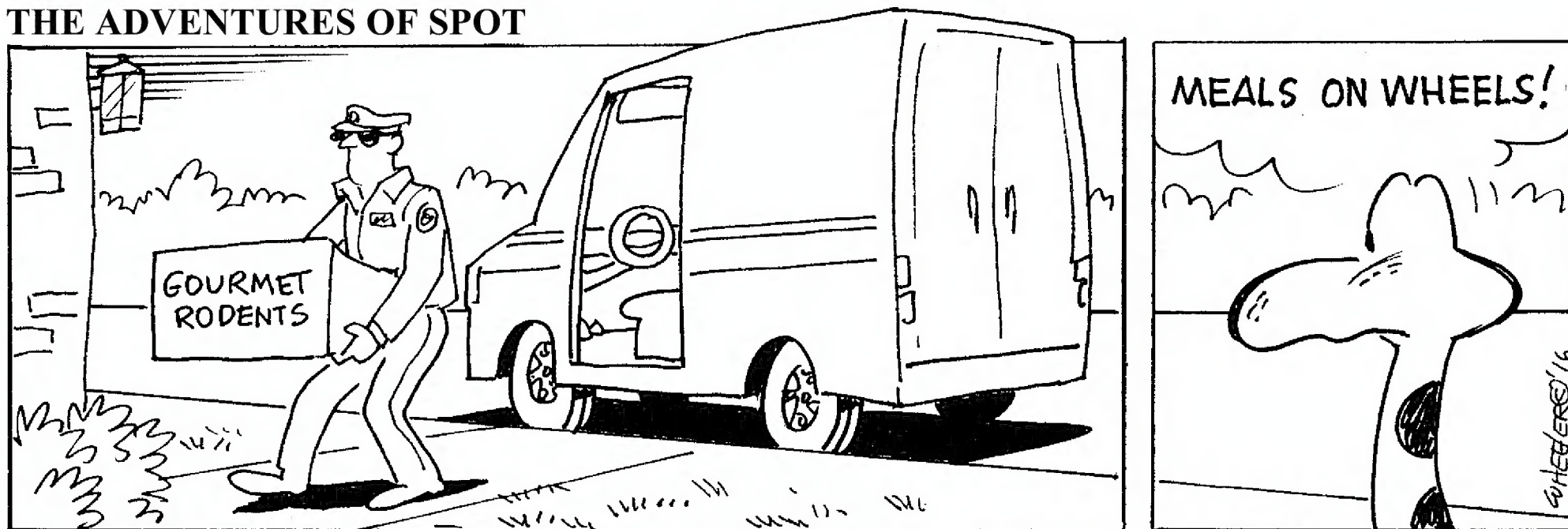
Board of Directors Meeting

Are you interested in how the decisions are made that determine how the Chicago Herpetological Society runs? And would you like to have input into those decisions? If so, mark your calendar for the next board meeting, to be held at 7:30 P.M., Friday, January 13, 2017, at the Schaumburg Township District Library, 130 S. Roselle Road, Schaumburg.

The Chicago Turtle Club

The monthly meetings of the Chicago Turtle Club are informal; questions, children and animals are welcome. Meetings normally take place at the North Park Village Nature Center, 5801 N. Pulaski, in Chicago. Parking is free. For more info visit the group's Facebook page.

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